

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8939
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
DIA WASHDC
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 3773

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, SHUM, ES
SUBJ: PROPOSED US COURSE OF ACTION RELATED TO 1980 AND 1982-
SALVADORAN ELECTIONS

REF: SAN SALVADOR A-28, MARCH 16, 1978, PART III-I-C

1. RECENT ELECTORAL HISTORY IN EL SALVADOR HAS NOT BEEN
INSPIRING. LARGE-SCALE FRAUD WAS CHARGED IN PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTIONS OF 1972 AND 1977 AND POST-ELECTORAL VIOLENCE
BROUGHT NUMEROUS DEATHS AND INJURIES IN BOTH CASES. ON
MARCH 12, 1978, NATIONWIDE ELECTION OF LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY AND MUNICIPAL MAYORS WAS BOYCOTTED BY ALL
MEANINGFUL PARTIES OF THE OPPOSITION.

2. NEXT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AND MAYORALTY ELECTION
IS SCHEDULED FOR EARLY 1980. PRESUMABLY WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE
WIDEST POPULAR PARTICIPATION UNDER FAIREST AND
MOST FREE ELECTORAL CONDITIONS POSSIBLE. IF SO, GOES HAS
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A LONG AND DIFFICULT WAY TO GO. WE CANNOT HOPE TO SEE THIS
ACCOMPLISHED IN THE IMMEDIATE PERIOD OF ELECTION
CAMPAIGN BECAUSE OPPOSITIN WILL QUITE RIGHTFULLY PROTEST
THAT OBJECTIVE ELECTORAL ATMOSHPERE MUST BE CREATED LONG
BEFOREHAND IF ELECTION ITSELF IS TO BE MEANINGFUL.

3. LOOKING TOWARD THAT NEXT ELECTION AND THE 1982 PRESIDENTIAL

ELECTION PERHAPS THERE IS TIME AND OPPORTUNITY NOW TO SUGGEST TO THIS NATION'S RULERS THAT 35 YEARS OF MILITARY CONTROL ARE ENOUGH, THAT MILITARY IN VARIOUS OTHER LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES ARE BURNISHING THEIR RECORDS BY TURNING REINS OF GOVERNMENT BACK OVER TO CIVILIAN POLITICAL LEADERS, AND THAT PERHAPS LATTER'S COUNTERPARTS HERE SHOULD BE GIVEN A REAL AND EFFECTIVE CHANCE TO WIN POWER AT HONEST POLLS IN EARLY 1980.

4. AT PRESENT THIS IS ADMITTEDLY A VERY LONG-SHOT PROPOSAL. EL SALVADOR MILITARY ARE STILL OBSESSED WITH IDEA OF A CLEAR AND PRESENT COMMUNIST DANGER, AND THEY HAVE GREAT DIFFICULTY IN DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN REAL SUBVERSIVES AND LEGITIMATE OPPOSITION. ON THE OTHER HAND, THEY ARE INCREASINGLY UNEASY ABOUT GROWING POWER OF THE POPULIST LEFT AND THEIR OWN INABILITY TO COPE WITH ACTS OF SUBVERSION AND TERRORISM. WHAT WE HAVE IN MIND IS A PROPOSED COURSE OF ACTION WHICH MIGHT APPEAL TO THE MODERATE CENTER AND LEFT AS AN ONLY AVAILABLE CHANCE FOR AN "OPENING TO DEMOCRACY" AND TO THE RIGHT, I.E., THE MILITARY, AS A WAY TO BUY SOME ADDITIONAL TIME AND PERHAPS PICK UP CREDIT AND/OR CREDIBILITY FOR HAVING THE FORESIGHT TO GET IN STEP WITH THE TIMES.

5. WERE THIS IDEA TO BE SERIOUSLY RECEIVED AND ENTERTAINED BY RULERS OF EL SALVADOR, IT MIGHT BE
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APPROPRIATE ALSO TO SUGGEST TO THME THAT OAS OBSERVERS BE INVITED TO ATTEND 1980 ELECTION, THUS CONTRIBUTING TO INTERNATIONAL ACCEPTANCE OF THAT ELECTORAL PROCESS.

6. THIS RECOMMENDATION CONFORMS TO EMBASSY'S PROPOSED COURSE OF ACTION (SEE REF.) FOR ACCOMPLISHMENT OF ITS OBJECT I FOR EL SALVADOR FOR IMPROVED HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVANCE.

7. DEPARTMENT'S REACTION AND COMMENTS ARE INVITED.
DEVINE

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NNN

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